Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: I am Fartacus by Mark Maciejewski", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Hanna Paulouskaya. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1469. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Mark Maciejewski

I am Fartacus

United States (2017)

TAGS: Spartacus





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	I am Fartacus
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2017
First Edition Details	Mark Maciejewski, *I am Fartacus*. New York: Aladdin, 2017, 336 pp.
ISBN	9781481464192
Genre	Children's novel*, Novels
Target Audience	Children (ages 10–14)
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
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This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Mark Maciejewski (Author)

Mark Maciejewski is an American writer and teacher. He lives in Seattle, Washington, with his wife, the writer Donna Barba Higuera and family. As well as *I am Fartacus* (2017), he has written *Electric Boogerloo* (2018).

Source:

Official website (accessed: July 27, 2022).

Simonandschuster (accessed: July 27, 2022).

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	Mark Maciejewski, *Electric Boogerloo: I am Fartacus*, New York: Aladdin, 2018. (sequel)

Summary

I am Fartacus is told in the first person by its protagonist, Chub (Maciek Trzebiatowski), a sixth-grade student who is an outcast at Alanmoore (sic) Middle School. It focuses on enmity and friendship. Chub is sworn enemies with the school's golden boy, Archer Norris. At primary school, the duo had been best friends, but an accident with dry-cleaning fluid left Chub without hair, and destroyed the friendship. Now, Archer rules the school, while Chub does his best to ruin his former friend's life. Chub does this with the help of his new friend, Moby, a flatulent vegetarian, but his plots never quite work. One day, however, while serving detention in the library, Chub helps the elderly librarian, Mrs Belfry, with her computer, and discovers the password to the school's computer system. He discovers that there is more to Archer's seemingly untouchable status than meets the eye: that the headmaster, Mr Mayer, is caught up in an illicit gambling ring, and Archer is blackmailing him.

Chub, who likens himself to the heroic slave, Spartacus, whose story he has learned from watching films at his cousin Jarek's second-run movie theatre, decides to bring Archer down, once and for all. But as he lays his plans, infiltrating the gambling ring with the help of Moby (who displays an unexpected talent at counting cards) and an unlikely gang of misfits including Shelby, a theatrical girl who lives with her grandmother, and the thuggish McQueen twins, something unexpected happens. Chub loses his appetite for revenge. Chub decides life is simpler if Archer continues to be the school's golden boy. He gives the money Moby has won in the poker game to Mr Mayer, and releases him from Archer's power. He releases Archer from the eternal contest between popular kids and nerds, that has driven the school, but does not humiliate him or overthrow his power. Instead, Chub learns to be happy with the friends he has made, especially Moby. The novel explains that the two became friends when Chub was the only kid in the cafeteria not to laugh after Moby had farted violently. And it ends with another moment of flatulence: in which Chub and his new friends, like the Roman slaves announcing they are Spartacus, take the blame when Moby farts loudly and

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noxiously in class.

Analysis

The phrase “I am Fartacus” comes from the 1960 film *Spartacus*, in which slaves in a failed uprising refuse to give up their leader, each crying “I am Spartacus,” when the Romans try to find out who has organised their rebellion. The phrase is symbolic of solidarity, and has become a catchphrase much used in the modern world. “I am Fartacus” is a play on this phrase, with t-shirts and badges and internet avatar slogans proclaiming that the bearer is prodigiously flatulent. It is a classic example of how humour can work by drawing together high and low concepts – here the idea of heroism and base bodily moments combine.

Mark Maciejewski’s novel draws on this phrase, in a novel that loosely connects with the Stanley Kubrick film through its focus on friendship and solidarity in the face of an unfair hierarchical system. The parallel between the Romans and the Slaves, and the cool kids and the nerds of Alanmoore high school is lightly indicated, as Maciejewski instead interrogates the sense of social hierarchy at the school, suggesting that Chub’s social isolation is as much the result of his own paranoia as it is of the other children’s ideas about fitting in. A revenge plot gives way to a story about resolving differences, and accepting the idea that everyone has their own struggles. The punchline of the novel – which is its title – appears at the end, in a scene where Chub takes the blame for Moby’s epic fart, only to find that his friends also do the same.

With its emphasis on farts and other kinds of slapstick humour, the novel is firmly aimed at a middle-grade readership: i.e., children between the ages of 10 and 14 who will be increasingly aware of the nuances of social pressure, and also will enjoy the novel’s frequent descents into gross-out humour. As such, it indicates the kind of literature that is written to appeal to young readers’ sense of humour, and to reassure them that friendships can be found in unusual places.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Spartacus

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Bullying* Coming of age Conflict Friendship Gender expectations/construction Hierarchy Historical figures Humour Masculinity Peers School Society

Further Reading	Hale, Elizabeth, "I am Fartacus", *Antipodean Odyssey*, 15/8/2020 (accessed: July 27, 2022). Lopez-Ropero, Lourdes, "'You are a Flaw in the Pattern': Difference, Autonomy and Bullying in YA Fiction", *Children's Literature in Education* 06, 43.2 (2012): 145–157. Späth, Thomas and Margrit Tröhler, "Muscles and Morals: Spartacus, Ancient Hero of Modern Times", in Almut-Barbara Renger and Jon Solomon, eds., *Ancient Worlds in Film and Television: Gender and Politics*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012, 41–63.

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